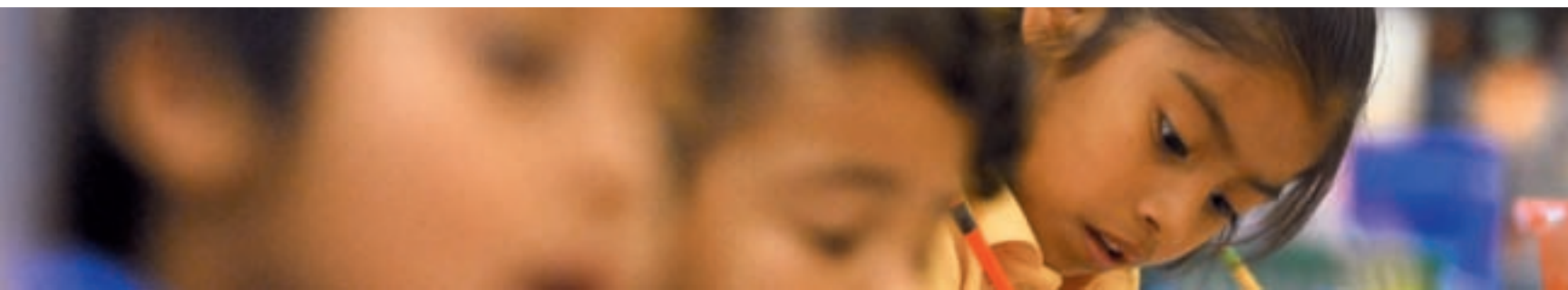


The 2007 Broad Prize for Urban Education



Celebrating Excellence in America's Public Schools



The Broad Prize for Urban Education sculpture, designed by artist Tom Otterness, resides at the U.S. Department of Education and is inscribed each year with the name of the winning district. The winning school district also receives a bronze sculpture for its central office, and each finalist school district receives a smaller stone sculpture. Sculpture © Tom Otterness, 2002.

It can be done.

Progress in urban education isn't just possible—it is happening.

The \$1 million Broad Prize in Urban Education, the nation's largest K-12 public education award given annually by The Broad Foundation, is awarded to urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing income and ethnic achievement gaps.

One hundred of the largest urban American school districts serving more than 9 million students nationwide are eligible.

2007 Broad Prize Finalists

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NORTHSIDE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

These districts demonstrate that success in urban school districts is possible.

Like many large urban districts, the majority of students in these districts are traditionally disadvantaged. And like most large urban districts, the reforms being implemented in these districts have faced frequent opposition. Yet despite these challenges, hard work—from the classroom to the school to the district administrative office—is paying off. On measure after measure, these finalists have outperformed peer districts in their states.

The Broad Prize recognizes and rewards the hard work of districts—and their students. Graduating seniors in the winning district will receive \$500,000 in college scholarships, and graduating seniors in each of the four finalist districts will receive \$125,000 in scholarships.

It is their success, in the face of challenges, that makes the stories of Broad Prize districts worth telling. Although they all have much more work to do, they have proven that progress in urban education can be achieved.



319	Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	For more information: Cynthia Fernandes 203-332-2832 cfernandes@bridgeportedu.net
34	Number of Schools	
21,722	Number of Students	
95%	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced-Price School Lunch	
10%	Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	
1,423	Number of Teachers	
\$196 million	Annual Budget	

Bridgeport Public Schools

As students file into her Columbus Elementary School special education classroom, veteran teacher Filomena Goncalves notices that one student, who she knows is transitioning between foster homes, is not wearing his school uniform. When she asks him why he isn't wearing the required uniform, he quietly replies, "it smells."

Ms. Goncalves takes his hand and walks down the hall to an office. She reaches into a box of extra blue pants and white shirts that have been donated to the school by a local church, and hands a set to the student.

As they head back to her classroom, Goncalves catches a wave of relief cross her student's face.

In a Connecticut district where 95 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, Bridgeport Public Schools works hard to extend the district's focus beyond straight academics to include what Superintendent John Ramos calls the "well-being of the whole child."

"We need to create a school infrastructure that supports student social and emotional well-being, too, as a way of eliminating the barriers to learning," explains Henry Kelly, deputy superintendent for learning and teaching.

"We provide full family health care for students and their families right here in the school," says Daizy Martinez, a health counselor at Columbus Elementary. "We have a nurse practitioner, a dentist, a psychiatrist, a mental health counselor and an outreach worker. Our team's major focus is to keep kids healthy so they can learn in school."

Teachers report that these "wrap-around" services, along with strong community partnerships and integrated professional development, have made it possible for students—and teachers—to focus on learning in the classroom.

And the focus is paying off. Bridgeport outperformed other Connecticut districts serving similar student populations in elementary, middle and high school reading and math in 2006, according to The Broad Prize methodology. Between 2003 and 2006, Bridgeport also showed greater improvement than other Connecticut districts serving similar income levels in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology. In addition, the two-time Broad Prize finalist has been more successful than the state average in increasing the number of African-American and low-income students at the most advanced level of proficiency in elementary school reading and math and middle school math.

Teachers and principals also attribute much of this improvement to the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program that the district adopted in 2006. PBIS allows school and district staff to analyze data—such as referrals, suspensions, and parent and teacher surveys—that enables them to proactively identify and support appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment. Students follow a strict code of conduct, laid out in a "social contract," and receive rewards for every good deed.

At Garfield Elementary School, students receive tiger paw stickers each time they're "caught" being "safe, respectful and responsible." Marilyn Feliciano, parent of a Garfield third-grader, says, "My son comes home in the afternoons shouting, 'Mommy, look! I got a tiger paw! How many do I have now?' It's a good incentive for the kids, and they love it."



School leaders, teachers and district staff members agree that PBIS has led to more than just tiger paws—the expectations and incentives have resulted in better student-teacher relationships and behavior across the district. “Children realize that positive behavior is expected throughout the building, not just in the classroom,” says Patricia Hassan, a special education teacher. Several schools in Bridgeport have also seen significant decreases in the number of suspensions and frequency of disciplinary problems since PBIS was introduced.

Believing that young people will learn more from what you do than what you say, Superintendent Ramos has gone a step further, convincing all Bridgeport leadership, administrators, teachers and staff to sign off on their own “social contracts.” Like student “social contracts” under PBIS, signatories to these adult “agreements” are bound to treat one another with respect—“not just in meetings, but in-between meetings,” says Ramos.

“What we’re about is trying to model what we expect of our children in their classrooms by the way we work among ourselves,” says Ramos. “Is it a love fest among staff all the time? No. And the tighter the resources get, the more difficult it becomes to abide by the social contract. But just like our students, we’re learning.”

Engaged community partners

The mission of the Bridgeport Public Schools and its supporting community is to graduate all students ‘college ready’ and prepared to succeed in life.

Teachers, district leaders and community members around the small city are quick to point out that inclusion of the phrase “and its supporting community” was a significant addition in 2006 and reflects the substantial role of parents, city leaders and local community organizations in the district’s ongoing improvement.

“The mission isn’t just words,” says Ramos. “Community leaders throughout the city realize that the district’s current challenge in rolling out reforms—what I call ‘changing the tire while the car is still moving’—is not just a problem for teachers. It’s a problem for businesses, community members, parents—everyone. And it’s everyone’s job to work toward fixing it.”

Bridgeport’s community partnerships make important additional services available to district students. From providing grants to pay for additional teachers to college scholarships for students, local foundations and businesses have stepped up to help.





One of Bridgeport's most successful partnerships with the local United Way chapter resulted in a 2006 citywide summit to gather community input on the development of the district's mission and strategic plan. More than 500 Bridgeport residents, parents, district and school staff, students, and state and city representatives attended a full day of sessions to discuss their perceptions of the school system, visions for its future and action steps to improve.

"It started out with some community conversations on a much smaller scale," says Andrea Kovacs, a Bridgeport parent and senior staff member at United Way. "How could we close the academic achievement gap for all students in Bridgeport? We realized that to answer this question we needed something much bigger that would involve more people and that would come out with some real recommendations."

As a result of this summit and the district's ongoing outreach, the school system has recently embarked on a critical relationship with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council.

The board of education's budget is controlled by the city, although the city's schools are otherwise independent. The Business Council is currently negotiating with the city to untangle the board's budget from the city to free up funds for instruction. In addition, the Business Council is performing an operational and management review to identify district inefficiencies.

"Our number one priority," says Paul Timpanelli, CEO of the Business Council, "is to identify where dollars can be redirected into the classroom to improve student results."

Embedded professional development

The district offers frequent professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders, but its primary—and substantial—investment in ongoing learning is through instructional coaching. Every elementary and middle school in the district is assigned one numeracy coach and at least one literacy coach—sometimes as many as three, depending on the needs of the school's student population.

Teachers also enjoy the support of curriculum specialists—district team members who are deployed to schools throughout the city to support curriculum design and instruction. Teachers laud these embedded professional development strategies as one of their greatest instructional supports.

"Our specialists and our coaches are of tremendous support to the implementation of the curriculum and the instruction that takes place in the district," says Ricardo Rosa, the district's director of mathematics.

Union leaders agree.

"Our gains are due to professional development and fantastic coaches," says Milagros Vizcarrondo, president of Bridgeport Council of Administrators and Supervisors, the local administrators' union.

Bridgeport's coaches don't stay on the sidelines. They spend at least 60 percent of their time in classrooms, offering on-site assistance to teachers by modeling teaching strategies, co-teaching lessons and providing additional materials. Outside of class, coaches help teachers analyze student performance data.

"Our coaches are great," says Claudia Tuozzli, a third-grade teacher who has worked in Bridgeport for 10 years. "They share assessment tools that are different from what I normally use, and they help me tap into them so that I can really assess where each child is."

Despite the many challenges that students, teachers and leaders must overcome in a district that is surrounded by some of the wealthiest districts in the country, it is clear that Bridgeport's strategic investments in instructional leadership are a significant lever for its continued improvement.



29	Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	For more information: Chris Eftychiou 562-997-8250 ceftychiou@lbusd.k12.ca.us
91	Number of Schools	
90,663	Number of Students	
68%	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced-Price School Lunch	
24%	Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	
4,259	Number of Teachers	
\$739 million	Annual Budget	

Long Beach Unified School District

In a small classroom at Webster Elementary, an African-American fourth-grade boy, marker in hand, stands at the front of a classroom covered floor-to-ceiling with colorful student work. “ $X + 2 = 16$,” he writes on the whiteboard. He then proceeds cautiously, yet correctly, to solve the equation with all his classmates watching.

“Thumbs up if this is right, thumbs down if it’s not,” says the teacher to rapt attention. All thumbs go up. Then the whole class, including the proud boy at the front of the room, pats themselves on the back.

This type of high-level instruction, along with a consistent college focus, targeted teacher training and pilots of promising practices, are signs that Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) didn’t rest for even a minute after winning the 2003 Broad Prize. This year, they are back in the finalist’s circle—the first year they were again eligible.

In 2006, according to The Broad Prize methodology, Long Beach students outperformed other California districts serving similar student populations in reading and math in elementary, middle and high school. Between 2003 and 2006, Long Beach also narrowed the achievement gap between Hispanic students and their white peers in high school reading and elementary school reading and math. Finally, the achievement gap between African-American students and their white peers has closed faster in Long Beach elementary school math and middle school reading and math than elsewhere in the state.

Long Beach has made strong efforts to introduce high-level concepts like algebra as early as elementary school and to expand course offerings to align with California college entrance requirements, supplemented by programs like EXCEL, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)—a college preparatory program for students in the academic middle who are often from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Such strategies are designed to engage students in higher-level learning and to increase enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses once they reach high school.

One of these campuses, Cabrillo High School, houses some 4,000 students and manages to look more like a college campus, with small groups of students chatting along idyllic grassy courtyards. Cabrillo used to have the lowest number of students in AP classes in the district. But in the last five years, participation has tripled—nearly 500 students took AP courses last year. Students learn about AP opportunities through “AP cafes,” “AP fairs,” “AP walk-throughs” and “AP family nights.” Teachers, many of whom wear T-shirts saying “College-Bound?” and AP coordinators identify students with AP potential as early as possible in the lower grades—and then track them to encourage them to enroll when they enter high school.

“As a result of these college-bound initiatives, the number of AP students has skyrocketed,” says Superintendent Chris Steinhauser, who has gone as far as covering the cost for at least 20 hours of tutoring for every AP student, providing a Summer Bridge Program for first-time AP students, and even subsidizing the cost of exams.



Indeed, since 2003, Long Beach student enrollment in AP courses has increased by 49 percent, and the district has seen 75 and 62 percent increases, respectively, for African-American and Hispanic students. The percentage of African-American students who take the SAT has risen since 2003, as well.

Steinhauser says, simply, yet confidently, “If Long Beach can do it, the rest of the nation can do it.”

“Grow your own” teacher training

Former Long Beach teacher Wendy Hayes tells the story of one of her favorite middle school history students.

“Emily was terrific in the seventh grade. We kept in touch after she started high school, and I mentored her through her senior project. Years later, after I took a position in the central office, I started teaching part time at California State University Long Beach’s (CSULB) College of Education—and there she was in my methods class! But after all these years, what I am most proud of is that when she graduates next year, Emily is taking a teaching position here in our district.”

This small-town story is not uncommon in Long Beach, though the district serves more than 90,000 students. Long Beach’s student success is due, in part, to its strong commitment to growing local talent: most district teachers grew up in Long Beach, and four out of five earned their teaching credential from CSULB.

To help fill between 400 and 500 new teaching posts each year, Long Beach has actively developed its pool of local teacher candidates by fostering a close partnership with local colleges and universities. District leaders have worked with college and university staff to help ensure that the students they recruit into their teaching programs closely match the needs in Long Beach schools, concentrating on minority candidates and students interested in teaching shortage subject areas such as science.

The district has also helped shaped the quality and content of college teacher preparation curriculum. Like Hayes, the majority of staff members in the central office teach at least one class as adjunct faculty at CSULB’s College of Education. “We get into their college classrooms when students just start to participate in their methods classes,” says Joe Pistoia, a program administrator in human resources. “We don’t wait until they’re student teaching.” Likewise, college professors are encouraged by the district to weigh-in on district student curriculum and teacher professional development.

“These relationships have helped ensure that new teachers who come in to our system are already trained in what we think they should know,” says Chris Dominguez, deputy superintendent for curriculum, instruction and professional development. “We’ve been able to advance some of our new teacher training because new candidates understand the way we do things in Long Beach.

And once teachers arrive in Long Beach, they tend to stay. While many districts across the country fight to keep their teachers longer than two or three years, the average Long Beach teacher serves 12 years in the classroom. The result is a unique system where teacher recruitment, training and retention are all aligned to keep up with changing student needs.

School-based best practices spread district-wide

In 2003, an elementary school teacher in one Long Beach school experimented with a new data-driven program that allowed him to cover blocks of concepts at a different pace than most classrooms—and with a different instructional approach. At the end of the year, he reported to the district that as a result of the program, he had seen great improvements in his students' math achievement.

Encouraged, district officials offered other elementary school teachers in the district the opportunity to implement the same program in their own classrooms. Four elementary school teachers volunteered to try it and reported similarly stunning results with their students.

In 2005, this program—now called MAP2D—was put in place in 15 elementary schools across LBUSD. Though these schools serve a higher percentage of English language learners and students who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch, early results show that students in these schools performed 9 percent higher on the California State Test (CST) than their peers in other LBUSD elementary schools. So, in 2006-07, the MAP2D program was rolled out in 47 of the district's 51 elementary schools.

When potential best practices like MAP2D “bubble up” from the classroom or school level, district officials in LBUSD typically pilot them within a small group of schools to evaluate their success in raising student achievement. Then, if a pilot works for students, it is spread district-wide.

“Things are tried out in a small form, whether it's in one school or one classroom, and when they're proved to be successful practices, they're taken to scale,” Steinhauser explains.

Several other strong district programs have developed under this approach.

For example, the district provides teachers in Long Beach with pacing guides on the recommended sequence and duration for each lesson.

“But pacing guides weren't just handed down from the curriculum office like the Ten Commandments,” elementary school principal Tom Malkus is quick to point out. “They were developed and then piloted, and teachers had input into what was working and what wasn't through teacher forums and surveys. The district monitors how it's going in other schools, too, and they adjust it. The pacing charts change a little bit each year as we get better and smarter about it.”

Another pilot sprung up after a group of teachers identified a weakness in the district's writing program. Together with the assistant superintendent of elementary schools, Dominguez worked to determine how to introduce changes to the program and offer a professional development plan that would support them.

“We figured out how we were going to fund the training and then did our pilot. We redirected district resources to get coaches in place for that next year,” Dominguez says, explaining the “turnkey” approach to professional development that Long Beach commonly uses when rolling out new information under a pilot.

“Teachers know that if they're interested in something, they can have a voice in it, and the district will listen,” says Eric Brundin, a science curriculum leader for the district.

With home-grown principals and teachers and district leaders who encourage innovation and constant improvement, it is no surprise that the district has once again earned recognition as a Broad Prize finalist for its high student achievement.





4	Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	For more information: Felipe Noguera 305-995-1000 fnoguera@dadeschools.net
378	Number of Schools	
353,283	Number of Students	
61%	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced-Price School Lunch	
15%	Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	
23,566	Number of Teachers	
\$6 billion	Annual Budget	

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Rudy Crew stands under a screen projection of a slide showing student achievement data disaggregated over time at one troubled school. Under the glow of the screen, Crew leads a pointed discussion with his top district administrators about what is in many districts a hot potato subject: whether to initiate the human resources process to remove a principal.

Under rapid-fire questioning, cabinet level staff and regional superintendents respond with all relevant facts and angles: What does the student achievement data show? What is the problem? What supports have we offered? Has the principal improved? How has HR been involved?

Welcome to a Miami-Dade COMSTAT meeting.

Determined not to receive the usual school district criticism for being slow to respond to crises or deploy resources when they are needed, in 2006, Crew established monthly COMSTAT meetings—gatherings of top district and regional leaders designed to rapidly assess needs based on data, dispatch resources to struggling schools and quickly evaluate success. COMSTAT, short for “communications status” or “command status,” depending on whom you ask, is modeled after the crime control strategy initiated by former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton and implemented by public agencies and businesses around the country. School districts, however, rarely use it.

During monthly COMSTAT meetings, Crew and his administrative and academic cabinet analyze and review data on a variety of district and school-level performance indicators. Regional superintendents present the most pressing issues from schools in their region.

The meetings are tense because the stakes are high: Crew asks pointed questions and expects immediate answers. Every staff member who oversees a major district function gathers in the same room, and they all have to answer to one another. With a no-excuses, no-time-to-waste, solution-oriented leadership style, Crew quickly leads a team discussion to determine what it will take to get the job done right for kids.

“We all look at the data and ask, ‘What is it telling us? What are the issues that stand in the way of improving instruction at this school?’” explains Antoinette Dunbar, the district’s deputy superintendent for curriculum and instruction. “We hear from the region about what resources are required, and then the cabinet figures out how to provide them to the school.”

Before the meeting ends, every member of Crew’s cabinet knows what they have to do—and they hustle to get it done.

“I want an answer on my desk by Thursday,” says Crew.

COMSTAT has been used to rapidly deploy resources to several schools around the district—particularly in the School Improvement Zone, the group of lowest-performing schools in the county that have been identified for additional support.

“In one of our early meetings, there was a very needy high school that required immediate deployment of technology to help analyze students’ reading progress,” says Lourdes Rovira, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. “When we heard that at the meeting, we quickly deployed a whole SWAT team of technology people. They purchased additional computers, they updated labs.” By the next COMSTAT meeting, the issue had been resolved.

“We send all types of resources: technology, security, additional teachers, additional counselors, social workers, student support teams,” says Christine Master, assistant superintendent for professional development. “We know that when the deputy superintendent we work for comes back from a COMSTAT meeting, we have two and a half days to move.”

COMSTAT makes it possible to rapidly deploy targeted resources that might not otherwise be scheduled for months. With that kind of help at the ready, school leaders, teachers and students can continue to focus on what matters most: learning.

Crew sums up the strategy of this two-time Broad Prize finalist. “My team has been operating like a military unit with a mission, on the most important field of all, where the work itself is a badge of honor. And by the way—we plan to be victorious.”

Driving instruction based on data

On a hot spring Miami day, Alessandra Russo-Cambon strides up and down rows of desks, collecting benchmark tests from each student. A five-year middle school teacher in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, she knows just how much paper those tests can generate.

“As recently as a few years ago, these papers might have gotten graded and placed in a cabinet folder to collect dust,” Russo-Cambon recalls. But Miami’s new computerized data system allows her to view and analyze results on these assessments immediately.

Three times a year, most students in Miami-Dade County participate in diagnostic benchmark assessments in reading, language arts and mathematics. But teachers like Russo-Cambon can also generate their own more frequent assessments from an online bank of questions provided by the district and aligned with state standards. All of these tests are designed to provide teachers with the tools to target weak spots and adjust their instruction to help students fully grasp each concept before they are tested.

A mantra in public education, data-driven instruction is clearly much easier said than done. But in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, data drives the district’s daily reality. An online system enables teachers to access their students’ academic progress and generate a variety of customized reports with the click of a mouse.

“You can formulate a report to look at an individual student’s performance,” says Barbara Walker, a seventh-grade teacher. “You can program it to look at classes. You can look at an entire grade. Instead of teachers having to keep tabs on all of these different papers, one program keeps the data.”

Customized reports show teachers where their students are performing well—and where they’re not. In some cases, the data even suggest why. “A teacher can see, for example, all those students that may have gotten the same incorrect answer. They can ask, ‘Was this student absent when I presented this material? Was there some kind of disciplinary action that kept them out of the classroom? Or do I need to deliver this material in a different way?’” says Millie Fornell, Miami’s assistant superintendent for secondary curriculum and instruction.

At all levels of the district, staff agree that putting data to work in this way—truly using it to drive instruction—along with the district’s rapid response to problems and shared vision, has contributed to the student achievement gains the district has seen in the past few years.





Between 2003 and 2006, according to The Broad Prize methodology, Miami-Dade County Public Schools showed greater improvement than other Florida districts serving students with similar income levels in elementary, middle and high school reading and math. In 2006, Miami-Dade's Hispanic students achieved higher average proficiency rates in elementary, middle and high school reading and math than the state average. And between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade reduced achievement gaps between African-American and Hispanic students and their white peers. During those same years, Miami-Dade also successfully raised participation rates for African-American and Hispanic high school students in the ACT, SAT and AP exams.

Shared vision

Ask anyone in Miami-Dade County what the goals of the school district are, and you are likely to hear a similar answer.

"The focus of everything we do is to make sure that all students are given an equal opportunity to achieve their maximum potential," says Yubeda Miah, an elementary school principal.

"We provide the best opportunity we can for our students to be competitive in that bigger world that's out there," says Dannie MacMillan, longtime community activist, parent and former president of the Dade County PTA. "Our target is to give students the world."

Indeed, these themes of equal opportunity, maximizing potential and global competition are mirrored in the district's core mission, vision and goals outlined in its 2005-2008 Strategic Plan.

Chances are, if you ask these same people—parent, administrator, teacher or community member—where this vision originated, they'll point directly to Crew. When the superintendent arrived in Miami in 2004 after serving earlier in his career as chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, he made a significant effort to meet with parent groups, community members, the business community and other stakeholders to gather input that would help define the district's vision and mission. Today, the evolution of that mission—the resulting district strategic plan, accessible on the front page of the district's website—can be found in every district staff member's office, and indeed in many classrooms and homes across the city.

But perhaps more importantly, Crew himself constantly beats the "mission" drum, building community support for the district and a clear understanding of its focus at school board meetings, twice-a-year town meetings and CEO briefings with local business leaders throughout the year.

"The CEO briefings... are really a great event," reports one community leader who has attended several. "You get to sit for an hour with the superintendent, directly. That, to me, is amazing. It's the fourth largest school district in the nation, and you have this personal access to the superintendent."

Crew also spends significant time harnessing the power of technology to personally and regularly communicate the priority work at hand to every one of the district's 378 schools through weekly webcasts to all principals. Principals report that the webcasts not only save them precious drive-time between the school and the district office downtown, but also allow them to hear the information they need first-hand.

By putting technology to work for the district and instilling a consistent vision, says elementary school principal Reginald Johnson, "Dr. Crew has actually taken the fourth largest school district and made it feel like the fourth smallest district in the country."



1	Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	<div>2007 BROAD PRIZE WINNER</div> <div>For more information: David Cantor 212-374-4341 dcantor@schools.nyc.gov</div>
1,450	Number of Schools	
1,042,277	Number of Students	
75%	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced-Price School Lunch	
13%	Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	
80,000	Number of Teachers	
\$17 billion	Annual Budget	

New York City Department of Education

Joel Klein, chancellor of the nation's largest school district, sits at the helm of an oak conference table in the historic Tweed Courthouse, just steps away from City Hall. Klein and his senior staff have gathered here, as they do regularly, to review the city's most recent student achievement data. While the meeting is conducted in serious tones, softly in the background in a strange contrast, voices can be heard singing.

Klein and his staff are unfazed. They continue discussing the results that have led New York City to become a two-time Broad Prize finalist and 2007 winner—and the singing grows louder.

Then, “Stomp, clap!” shouts a woman. A large number of feet and hands follow suit. The conference room is filled with noise.

A visitor not knowing better might think there are protesters outside. But the joyful, high-pitched, enthusiastic voices, stomps and claps are those of young children engaged in a lesson—one of many taught daily at the Ross Global Academy Charter School. The school is housed directly opposite the chancellor's main conference room wall—within earshot of those who make daily decisions on behalf of New York City's 1 million students.

As Klein wraps up the meeting, he acknowledges the children's voices—now so loud he has to raise his voice to be heard. “You see, we can't forget who we are working for,” he says with a grin.

Nothing better symbolizes the desire of New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg to connect the mayor's office, the chancellor and the school system than his decision to move the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) into Tweed Courthouse. Housing a city charter school here further demonstrates Bloomberg and Klein's commitment to their “Children First” motto. From restructuring the system's bureaucracy to closing chronically low-performing schools to awarding autonomy to educators across the district, New York City has undertaken groundbreaking reforms. The result? Between 2003 and 2006, New York City showed greater improvement in elementary, middle and high school reading and math than other districts in the state that serve similar income levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology. This improvement was shown by all NYCDOE student groups, most notably its low-income and minority students.

Breaking down the district monopoly

Before accepting Bloomberg's appointment to be chancellor, Klein was best known for leading the U.S. government's anti-trust case against Microsoft in the late 1990s. With these monopoly-busting credentials, it is no surprise that one of his first initiatives was to significantly restructure nearly every level of the school system.

“The definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again and to expect different results,” says Klein, explaining his rationale for the massive restructuring. In 2003, Klein first reassigned a significant amount of responsibility from the city's 32 community school districts to 10 new regional centers. These regions were each led by an instructional superintendent—so fewer layers existed between principals and the top district administrator.



From that time through the spring of 2007, local and regional instructional superintendents support teaching and learning in each region by observing and providing feedback to principals, conducting school walk-throughs, and providing guidance to teachers on curriculum development.

By design, these regions were supported by six “operational centers,” a more nimble support service office that assisted schools with human resources, service contracts, budgeting, information technology and more. This six-to-ten ratio was purposefully chosen, Klein explains, to break down the politics and deal-making that used to occur between operational centers and community districts—and to start redirecting schools’ focus on only one goal: raising student achievement.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Klein is further breaking down the district monopoly in fall 2007 by replacing these operating centers with new “service centers,” independent providers that sign contracts with individual schools. While most U.S. school districts keep food, busing, safety and facilities operations in separate departmental silos, NYCDOE is integrating them into one-stop shopping so principals can receive all the operational support they need in one place.

The speed with which the department has enacted these reforms is made possible in large part by mayoral control of the school system. Key decisions that affect district-wide policies and practices are concentrated in a few individuals, making possible swift and dramatic action.

“From the beginning, our whole theory of change was that schools are the units that matter,” says Klein. “Schools are the place where teaching and learning take place, and schools are the place where a kid either gets a fair shot or doesn’t.”

The opportunities for a fair shot appear to be increasing. In elementary and high school reading and math, achievement gaps are narrowing for Hispanic and African-American students. And in 2006, low-income and minority students outperformed their peers in other New York districts that serve similar populations, according to The Broad Prize methodology.

Opening hundreds of new schools

As part of its goal to provide an excellent school for every student, NYCDOE has opened nearly 200 new schools since 2003, phasing out 60 large, chronically low-performing schools and replacing them with small, personalized schools that limit grade size to about 100 students.

The schools that have been closed showed “very little evidence that a new leader could come in and turn them around,” says Josh Thomases, chief academic officer in the office of portfolio development. “We tried the principal replacement strategy. We tried new curriculum. We tried teacher development. We tried all the core strategies about reforming a school, but the failure had become institutionalized.”

Bushwick High School in Brooklyn had long suffered from violence, overcrowding, low academic achievement and a shockingly low graduation rate that hovered around 23 percent. The school was phased out beginning in 2003 as four small high schools opened to take its place. These small schools have improved student achievement among the same groups of students and are today maintaining 65 to 75 percent graduation rates.

The transition at Bushwick and at other schools around the city was no easy process. NYCDOE staff received what was predictable community opposition to dramatic change. In response, Klein and his staff have hosted meetings throughout the city whenever a school is slated to be closed, to ensure the transition from old school to new goes as smoothly as possible. At these meetings Klein often explains, “This school’s failure is the civil rights issue of the 21st century. Can anybody honestly tell me that only one in four people graduating is good enough for your community?”

Many of the new schools that have opened in place of the large, unsuccessful schools are modeled around a specific academic focus, such as technology or the arts. These new options provide families greater choices for their children’s learning.

Growing a cadre of quality teachers

All of New York City's numbers are staggering, particularly the number of teachers: 80,000. But nowhere are the numbers more daunting than in the department's division of human resources, which hires 7,000 to 8,000 new teachers every year—more than most school districts have on their entire payroll. This has been a particular challenge since 2003, when New York state law required all teachers to be certified in their subject area.

Since that time, the human resources office has revamped many of its policies to drastically increase the number and quality of new teacher candidates. While HR used to focus on “transactional” work like cutting payroll checks, the culture has changed in recent years, says Vicki Bernstein, deputy executive director of the division of human resources. “It's not just about making sure that you fingerprint somebody,” Bernstein says. “It is about how to bring in high-quality candidates.”

One of the first and simplest changes: moving up the hiring timeline in order to screen and make offers to talented teacher candidates earlier in the year. “If you don't make commitments to candidates early, you lose candidates—you lose the best candidates,” says Bernstein.

The city has also increased its focus on hard-to-staff areas such as math, science and special education by recruiting more teacher candidates from non-traditional backgrounds. To help meet the need for some 600 to 800 new math teachers every year, the department collaborates with local universities to attract professionals from other fields.

Principals also have more power to choose their teachers, thanks to an agreement with the teachers' union that allows principals to accept or deny transfer requests by teachers from other schools. The department's HR office now acts as a “broker” between principals and teacher candidates, allowing principals to personally interview and select teachers, rather than having teachers assigned by a regional superintendent.

In a city where nearly 86 percent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than 75 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, fostering a better fit between teachers and schools helps ensure that all students have a teacher who brings the skills, energy and commitment to help them succeed.

Empowering principals

While Klein spent his first few years working to get all schools on the same page, by streamlining regional structures and mandating a balanced literacy curriculum, he has since purposefully allowed the “control” pendulum to swing to the other side—so principals are making major decisions on behalf of their schools.

Starting in 2007, all principals in the city will receive greater decision-making authority for the particular needs of their schools, under Klein's expansion of the department's “Empowerment School” pilot that started in 2006. Principals across the city have greater autonomy over instructional methods, interim assessments, professional development, the school day and the budget. “Great results can be inspired by giving people the authority to do the work they need to do,” says Klein.

Mirza Sanchez Medina, principal of an Empowerment high school, agrees. “What we want is to do what's best for the students. Now all of us will be empowered to do that.”

In return for autonomy, the department holds principals accountable through strict performance contracts. Schools that have consistently low student achievement over time may face leadership changes or closure.

These clear lines of accountability, supported by the city's new organizational structure, are helping to ensure that New York City offers its students “not just a great school system,” in the words of Klein, “but a system of great schools.”





44	Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	For more information: Pascual Gonzalez 210-397-8550 pascualgonzalez@nisd.net
94	Number of Schools	
81,881	Number of Students	
46%	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/ Reduced-Price School Lunch	
7%	Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	
4,576	Number of Teachers	
\$1 billion	Annual Budget	

Northside Independent School District

In Teresa Laughon's sixth-grade science class, students are learning about the food chain. Holding a picture of an animal or plant in their hands, they find a place to stand along a large "food chain" jump-rope, getting their chain in order. "What eats a deer?" Laughon asks, and the lion and the deer take their places. One by one, all the students join in, until all are linked together along the rope. "Now, you're going to show me what you know," says Laughon, and the students take their seats. It's quiz time.

Laughon's food chain activity isn't just a clever ploy to work off middle school energy. This lesson is tied directly to Texas' state standards, which say each student should be able to "describe energy flow in living systems including food chains and food webs."

In first-time Broad Prize finalist Northside Independent School District (NISD) just outside San Antonio, it won't be long before Laughon and all other Northside teachers and principals know how well their sixth-graders are doing, thanks to the transparent results of Curriculum Diagnostic Benchmarks (CDBs)—district-wide assessments of student progress toward state standards. A district-wide Curriculum Management System (CMS) makes these results available immediately on the web to authorized staff such as teachers and administrators, allowing teachers to spot individual students who need assistance, seek out advice from other teachers in their school whose students have had more success, and track their progress compared to other schools in the district. CDBs and the CMS also infuse accountability throughout the system, making it possible for district leaders to compare results across classrooms at the school level and across all schools in the district.

The results are paying off for Northside's low-income, African-American and Hispanic students, who achieved at higher levels in reading and math than their state-wide counterparts in 2006. Thanks to the transparency of data, intensive staff support and time spent on building support for reforms, the district is also closing achievement gaps between its African-American and Hispanic students and their white counterparts in elementary, middle and high school reading and math, according to The Broad Prize methodology.

Teachers, principals and district staff members analyze numbers like these throughout the year, particularly during "District Data Day," a practice started in 2004 by Northside Superintendent John Folks. During these summer sessions, every principal in the district receives a binder full of demographic and assessment data for their school and the district. School leaders spend a day together at the district office, interpreting the data to inform the school improvement planning process.

"We look at how we compare to the state and the district, we look at trends, we look at everything," says elementary school principal Maggie Alvarado. "It provides an opportunity for me to call another principal and say, 'I can see that you did really well in reading, and our schools are very much alike. Tell me, what are some of the things that you're doing?'"

Teachers also appreciate new opportunities to use data, viewing it as a source of healthy competition. "Everything is so much more transparent now," says Jean Farmer, a district reading specialist. "Nobody can hide anymore—everything is out there."

But teachers weren't immediately receptive to Folks' plan to implement CMSs. "We were livid when it first started," says Kitty Hamilton, a teacher at Cable Elementary School. "I thought it was the dumbest thing I had ever heard. We didn't need any more tests around here. But then we started getting the data. We realized how much of a gold mine this was, because we didn't have to wait for the big state test to see where our real problem areas were."



To help overcome resistance, Folks made clear that data-driven instruction was not going away. At the same time, he strongly emphasized that these tools would not be used to punish teachers. “I kept saying to them, ‘We’re using this to evaluate whether the kids are learning and to identify kids who are struggling,’” he says.

Even students use the data transparency to track their own achievement. In Michael Alicea’s seventh-grade history class at Anson Jones Middle School, students’ results are posted by identification number on the back of the classroom door. Students can watch their progress over the course of the year in the colorful charts, displaying their growth from orange, to blue, to green.

“A few years ago, we’d get test scores, but we didn’t really make decisions based on them,” says Kathleen Akin, the district’s director of secondary administration. “Now, we do.”

Effectively using the bully-pulpit to motivate

One of the most popular places in the United States to live, San Antonio is growing by leaps and bounds. And one of every two houses built in the San Antonio area is constructed in the Northside district.

Students at Anson Jones Middle School see the growth every day, up close and personal. At lunch, a group of them runs across a soccer field while 50 feet away, construction cranes lift piles of dirt. And after it recently became the fourth-largest Texas district at nearly 82,000 students, Northside is now expected to grow by an astonishing 4,000 students per year. There is strong support for NISD programs and direction, as evidenced by the fact that in the last 10 years, voters have approved more than \$1.9 billion to open dozens of new schools.

When he came on board in 2002, Folks knew that to lead the district in one unified, student achievement-oriented direction while rolling out several new controversial initiatives like data-driven instruction and data transparency, he needed to ensure open lines of communication with teachers, administrators, parents, students and the community.

“In this culture of high expectations, we want open, honest, two-way communication,” says Folks, in his deep Southern drawl, cultivated in Oklahoma where he was previously the state’s superintendent of public instruction.

At the beginning of each school year, Folks conducts nine back-to-back pep-rally style “convocations” throughout the district, attended by every employee in each of the district’s nine feeder patterns, to share news of improvements in achievement, gaps that remain, challenges the district is facing and his expectations for the year.



Folks also keeps in direct touch with all district and school staff by sending them an email every Monday morning—the “Monday Message”—that he writes himself. In it, he communicates his expectations of students, updates staff on relevant statewide policy changes, and highlights the specific accomplishments of students and teachers.

Integrated, intensive staff development

Anita Stewart, one of Northside’s district support specialists for mathematics, remembers working with a new teacher in 2006. Though this particular teacher was relatively new to NISD, he had already been designated by the district as a “TINA,” a “teacher in need of assistance.”

“His students’ scores on the district benchmark tests were always the lowest in the school,” Stewart explains. “So I really focused on his classroom. Every day, he would instruct, and I would work with him in the classroom, interjecting here and there. Then, in-between classes, we would meet to reflect. Just a five-minute conversation about how he thought the lesson went, what he thought the students understood, what he would need to focus on the next day.”

By the end of the school year, his students’ state test scores moved from the lowest to the second highest in the school.

“This teacher needed help. We weren’t sure at first how he would do. But we got him the help, and he’s just shined,” says Stewart.

In Northside, school and district-level specialists like Stewart work on a daily and weekly basis to help teachers modify their instructional strategies or pull out students to work in small groups or one-on-one.

Teachers and school leaders agree this targeted staff support is a huge contributor to NISD’s success, helping to make it possible for the district to close achievement gaps between low-income students and their more affluent peers by nine percentage points in middle school reading and seven points in middle school math between 2003 and 2006.

Here, teacher professional development begins at the New Teacher Academy, a training program for all teachers—beginning and experienced—who are new to NISD. The district also assigns all beginning teachers an experienced mentor to help them through their first year.

Karl Feuge, a middle school reading teacher, remembers that when he first started teaching, “A big problem I had was with pacing: spending too much time on this or that particular subject and not being able to get everything done in a specific time frame. My mentor was key. He observed me and said ‘you’ve got to be more efficient when you’re going from one thing to another. You’re spending too much time here, and not enough time there.’ Whatever problem you’re having, the mentors have dealt with it before, and they can help you.”

In addition to mentors and content-area specialists, schools are also assigned a campus instructional technologist, a certified teacher who helps teachers use and analyze data and integrate technology into the classroom. These staff members not only serve as an integrated resource for teachers in the classroom, but they also report to and meet regularly with staff from the district’s office of curriculum and instruction, who then incorporate their feedback into district-wide professional development plans.

Folks intends to continue this intentional investment in staff development. “We support what our professionals do in the classroom, because we realize that what ultimately narrows the gap and improves student achievement is what our principals and teachers do every single day.”



The Broad Prize Selection Jury

The Selection Jury is comprised of nationally prominent individuals from business and industry, government and public service. The Jury reviews the statistical data and site visit reports for each finalist district and chooses the winner of The Broad Prize for Urban Education.

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One of the nation's leading education research and consulting firms, Berkeley, Calif.-based MPR Associates manages the rigorous and comprehensive quantitative data collection and analysis process for The Broad Prize.

SchoolWorks

SchoolWorks is an educational consulting company based in Beverly, Mass. Using a research-based rubric for district quality, SchoolWorks leads a site visit team of researchers and practitioners through the collection and analysis of interviews, documents and observations of Broad Prize finalist district practices.

Public Impact

Public Impact is a national education policy and management consulting firm based in Chapel Hill, N.C. Drawing on the expertise of its staff of researchers and thought leaders, Public Impact compiles the data and best practices gathered by MPR Associates and SchoolWorks into publications that are shared with other Broad Prize-eligible districts.

The Broad Prize Review Board

A distinguished group of the country's top education leaders serves as the Review Board for The Broad Prize for Urban Education. Review Board members examine performance indicators, demographic statistics and other information about the urban school districts that are eligible for the Prize. Based on their examination, the Review Board narrows the list of 100 eligible school districts to the five finalists for the Prize.

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